THE HUMAN DYNAMICS A Psychological Operations officer builds relationships with partner forces in Uganda. *U.S. Army photo.*

SOF, the Human Domain and the Conduct of Campaigns

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"To succeed, Joint commanders must be able to successfully maneuver in the most decisive domain, and that is the Human Domain."
— *Frank G. Hoffman and Michael C. Davies[1]*

Introduction

As a further understanding of the Human Domain grows and becomes adopted into operational art and doctrine, an understanding of the implications of campaigning in the Human Domain will become important to SOF strategists, planners and SOF theater maneuver commanders. What does this mean for SOF? What are the characteristics of future campaigns involving the Human Domain? As the discussion on the importance of the Human Domain continues to grow, the SOF community, already well-steeped in an understanding of operating in the Human Domain, will necessarily need to explore the aspects of operational art (linking tactical actions and operations to strategy through the use of campaigns) shaped by the impact of the Human Domain in achieving campaign objectives.

In the evolution of special operations roles and missions, one of the key purposes for the use of SOF has been in achieving effects within the Human Domain. These activities and functions include protecting the populace from acts of political violence or harnessing the energy of the populace to achieve its political aspirations. As an adjunct to these two "ways" to employ SOF, there is also the humanitarian dimension where special operations are used to support alleviation of suffering, which given the cause of the grievances, may contribute to conflict.

Thus, counterterrorism, foreign internal defense, unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations and humanitarian activities are all missions and operations which place the effects SOF try to achieve predominantly within the Human Domain. Special Reconnaissance deriving from information elicited from humans and used in targeting against human beings individually (such as man-hunting), is also within this category. While certainly there are military objectives to be achieved by SOF, often achieving operational objectives in the societal-political-psychological arenas of the Human Domain positions SOF as a key contributor for successful campaigns.

The Human Domain

Since most people live on the land, and that is where conflict is ultimately resolved, operations in the Human Domain are interdependent with strategic land warfare. The objectives of warfare in this domain are effects achieved within populations.[2]

The application of military (and diplomatic) power in the Human Domain is therefore intended to have influence over its various components to win population-centric conflicts. A growing number of SOF strategic thinkers are tuned to the aspects of the emerging concept of the Human Domain and the need to generate special operations (as a form of military power) to achieve effects in it, with maneuver redefined as leveraging the Human Domain to put the enemy at a disadvantage. In this domain, confronting the threat requires human intervention combined with the patience and persistence to operate where combatants and non-combatants converge.

BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY U.S. Special Forces team members participate in a training exercise with partner-nation Soldiers. *U.S. Army photo.*

The contest for power includes commanding the inputs and outputs of human terrain, both militarily and politically, to deny its use to the enemy. This contest (the battle of wills) will be fought with battlefield operating systems quite different from the norm: legitimacy, sovereignty, human security, moral diplomacy, political systems, political philosophies and ideology.

Attributes of the Human Domain. In *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, Geoffrey Till explains the attributes of the maritime environment and the need to secure it for economy and trade as the foundations of seapower. The term seapower describes how the application of power inherent in naval forces is used in this domain, shaped by the attributes of the maritime environment. In a loose analogy, his maritime attributes are somewhat modified with respect to those important to the conduct of special operations in the Human Domain, and their derivations are introduced below.[3]

Which of these are the most relevant in a campaign? Thus, what are the attributes of the Human Domain which dictate the functions of SOF for military purposes? Selections of attributes in the Human Domain which may have impact on special operations include:

- Human Security – the need to feel secure and have freedom from fear; the need for the primary necessities of life; the need for freedom
- Political – human beings arrange themselves under various ideological and political systems to establish governance and rule of law; this aspect of the human domain is often tested and challenged
- Gregarious (Groupism) – humans order themselves into associative arrangements from tribal, ethnic, and religious groupings up to the level of nationalism as citizens of the state (this can create anthropological friction)
- Humans are networked and are a source of information exchange and establish mediums of communication
- Humans are mobile – humans travel and migrate along established routes via a variety of transportation methods; if forced, humans are mobile as refugees
- Humans are a resource – humans provide commercial goods and trade of material goods along with their associated financial transactions
- The worst feature of humanity is anti-social behavior of a violent nature, to include criminality

SOF as an Asset in the Human Domain. There are various environments where SOF achieve their highest purpose and utility. There may be a gap in capability of traditional forces, or interagency, to fill these voids. There could be a lack of an instrument of national power to respond, particularly where the strategic utility that relates to the value of power is hindered. SOF may operate best in these environments where their application can have a major impact, such as in the Human Domain. SOF can achieve military objectives within the campaign, but more importantly, SOF can also help achieve political objectives with minimal investment, a lot less mass, lower political impact and risk, all as an economy of force for the resources invested. Some of these operating environments within the Human Domain require surgical precision and cultural agility.[4]

Strategy in the Human Domain. The proscriptions for developing campaign strategies in the Human Domain need not change from what is currently understood about methodologies to craft military campaigns. Balancing the triad of *ways, ends,* and *means* with a vi-

able strategic concept is still required for operational design in the Human Domain. Applying SOF within their core competencies is the *means*. The *ways* are known: FID, UW, security assistance, COIN, combatting terrorism, etc. Of particular note will be the design of desired end-states, and ascertaining what end-state for a populace is desired (this end-state must be nested within achieving the military and political objectives of the campaign). For example, a strategic end-state for the Human Domain may look like the following:

A secure and loyal populace, free from internal threats, governed by a legitimate political body in the eyes of the populace and enforcing the rule of law, with civic and institutional systems in place to alleviate suffering, address social and development problems, and includes the population in the political process.

Other ends might include protection of the loyal population, conversion of the neutral elements, and managing and isolating those populations that support the enemy. End-states for the Human Domain should also consider not only social and behavioral end-states, but economic, psychological, and developmental end-states. What is of importance, however, will be in understanding each population has its own complexity (loyalties, beliefs, culture, etc.) and a chosen measure to achieve an end in one case might not apply across the board in other cases.

The purpose of military operations in the Human Domain are to achieve a level of control over key portions of the domain critical

required to secure the domain or deny it to adversaries. This is the "by and with…" mantra. In order to achieve effects, the key for SOF will be the ability to have influence in their operational areas. First and foremost, this is achieved by cultural acumen and some level of assimilation into the societies they operate amongst. The ability to achieve rapport and foster personal relationships is the hallmark of having influence. SOF influence helps to further the concept of shared agreement on what regional and transnational threats pose to both America and its partners. Against adversaries, SOF employ assets designed to attack the will and morale of the enemy and influence adversary behavior (or conduct operations to change their behavior).

- *Human Security and Denial of the Human Domain to the Adversary.* A small branch of contemporary security studies addresses human security. For human security, interest is focused on threats to individuals in society, segments of the populace, or the population as a whole. These threats include activities thAT generate fear within a given population — physical violence and suffering. Physical violence emanates either from the state itself (a brutal, repressive regime) or from non-state actors who threaten internal security. Generally, these are considered acts of political violence — terrorism, insurgency, genocide, subversion, etc. Other fears may emanate from acts of suffering and include hunger, poverty and tragedy, which occurs from environmental

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to the achievement of campaign objectives, secure these portions to deny access to the enemy, and to buy space and time as a form of operational reach.

Subordinate campaign objectives would at least include those desired objectives in the Human Domain which are physical, psychological (cognitive and informational) and virtual.[5]

Special Operations Functions within the Human Domain. Power is the ability to do something; Special operations, as a form of military power, has the ability to perform the following operational functions in the Human Domain (similar to lines of logical effort):

- *Influence.* There are only a few, simple reasons for having influence within the Human Domain. The first, from a geo-strategic and strategic position is the ability to foster alliances and partnerships along with associated access to a country or region once a security threat arises. Influence, in this case, is based on long-term relationships built over time with deep trust, as well as diplomatic and economic measures to strengthen these relationships. The second reason for influence in the Human Domain is to change, shape or alter behavior (and perceptions) favorable to American and partner-nation security interests. The third reason is leverage. Leverage is used to coerce, convince or make the actors in the Human Domain conduct some physical activity

disaster. In the first case, this can be called freedom from threat; in the second case it can be called freedom from want.[6]

When conflict occurs involving the human domain it may be a combination of both, adding complexity for any military campaign. The security line of operation in a Human Domain-oriented campaign will be designed to address the dependent and the independent variables of these two facets of "fear" to create successful conditions for the desired end-states (or objectives) of the campaign.

Special Operations are applied at the local level to help secure the populace in the Human Domain. The intent is to deny the populace as a resource (and a source of legitimacy) from competitors.

- *Enable and Prevent.* Application of special operations are used to build partner capacity and improve and enhance the capabilities of security forces to combat internal and external threats. SOF conduct this role through foreign internal defense programs, regional military exercises (show of force), security assistance programs, and in contingency operations. If conflict cannot be prevented, then special operations functions and abilities are reoriented and applied with other elements of national power to at least mitigate the threat.
- *Control (less Command) in the Human Domain.* Similar to theories on airpower or seapower, command of the domain

may be impossible to achieve, since military forces are finite and cannot be everywhere. Command in a domain is a condition achieved when a form of military power can influence and achieve effects at will — total command, a form of superiority in the domain, is achieved when a military power can operate in a domain uncontested by adversaries. The campaign planner will need to pick and choose which portions and segments of the Human Domain where 'selective' command by military forces can be achieved. The purpose is to identify those portions of the Human Domain which need to be freed up to support the campaign while at the same time denying those portions to the enemy — this is true for civil and diplomatic endeavors, not just for military objectives.[7]

Like commanding the sea, what may only be possible due to the enemy's ability to penetrate and operate clandestinely and underground in the Human Domain, is the notion of 'control' in the Human Domain. Offensively, control is sought in order to enhance operations. The enemy is also attempting the same use of the Human Domain, so inherent with control is its defensive feature, denial.

Using the analogy of the purpose for sea control found in the *2010 Naval Doctrine Publication 1: Naval Warfare*, one may consider crafting the purpose of control in the Human Domain as phrased something similar to this:[8]

"*…to enhance maneuver in order to close with the enemy and provide for human security against threats in the Human Domain, while denying violent actors access to the domain; this then can enhance freedom of action in the Human Domain and enables the projection of forces into all of its facets.*"

Achieving this level of control during a campaign provides opportunities for maneuver (cross-domainal), access to resources, protection of critical infrastructure, securing LOCs and safeguarding institutions needed to achieve campaign objectives.

Control in the Human Domain consists of control over selected groups of the population (control of an entire populace is not possible, just like sea control does not mean that every portion of the maritime environment can be policed). Control in the Human Domain also includes control over resources needed by humans as well as control in the virtual domain

In the cognitive, psychological domain control refers to controlling the means of spreading an ideology, management of perceptions and the shaping of whatever narratives are required within the populace to support the campaign.

Other Campaign and Operational Art Considerations for SOF

Campaigning in the Human Domain will require an understanding of how to employ special operations within the construct of operational design. Some of these considerations include:

a. *An understanding of the center of gravity within human populations.* Centers of gravity within population-centric campaigns may not be found in absolutes. The history of irregular warfare suggests otherwise. Based on power, politics and perceptions, centers of gravity may shift as loyalties and the security context shifts. Operational designs should incorporate flexibility and adaptability to make these adjustments into the series of engagements within the campaign. The aggregate center of gravity, often stated as "the populace" actually consists of variables based on the military condition, the political condition and the psychological-societal perceptions of the population in any given phase of the campaign.

b. *Theater Design and Operational Areas.* Contesting land and terrain of no benefit to achieving effects within the Human Domain might be less of a feature of theater graphics and design than those based on orientation of the attributes of the Human Domain to disadvantage enemy forces. Mapping the operational environment in this manner includes identifying human inputs and outputs going into and out of the conflict area (fighters, smuggling, weapons, financing, ideology, etc.) and identifying "key" human terrain. Theater graphics for maneuver in the Human Domain may look like a layered set of 3-D graphics, incorporating a variety of data to ascertain where opportunities and vulnerabilities exist in the human population, as well as identifying decisive points. Based on graphics of this type, operations are conducted or refocused on what is important to the campaign.

c. *Lines of Communication.* Lines of communication are based on the flow of human beings: physically, culturally and virtually. It will be important to map social networks, both physical and in the virtual domain, commerce and trade routes, heavily used transportation routes, as well as those lines upon which civilians flee or migrate. A sub-element of these lines of communication include illegal routes that enable smuggling, infiltration and exfiltration as well as those rural routes use by migratory populations (for the movement of seasonal grazing by livestock, for hunting, etc.).

d. *Unity of Effort between Civilians and Military.* A pure military command is probably not feasible within a campaign involving the Human Domain. Previous doctrine for Internal Defense and Development may be useful here in ensuring that whatever the command and control mechanism chosen, it is collaborative and inclusive of civilian and developmental/humanitarian organizations to ensure the whole-of-government approach. At local levels, an understanding of councils, committees and civic organizations should be studied to incorporate best methods into the command style.

e. *Phasing.* Regardless of the phasing of any campaign plan, paramount to the Human Domain is securitizing the populace as a first phase, and all subsequent phases. These include neutralizing the effects of violence from violent political organizations and extremists, isolating the populace from adversaries and any other measures to ensure freedom from fear and want. Later phases might adopt the COIN doctrine of clear-hold-build, or merely focus on advancing the legitimacy of the government and the political process. One of the phases important to transition and withdrawal will be to implement whatever developmental programs are needed to ensure grievances do not re-emerge and re-ignite the conflict.